



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

AGENCIES, METHODS, MATERIALS, AND IDEALS OF SEX EDUCATION

WILLIAM TRUFANT FOSTER

Reed College, Portland, Oregon

The present social emergency is not concerned merely with diseases, or physiology, or laws, or wages, or suffrage, or recreation, or education, or religion. All of these phases of the present situation, and many others, must be taken into account in our attempted solution of the problem of sex hygiene and morals. A person who believes that he can offer a quick and certain way out of our difficulties appears to have no comprehension of the problem. This much, however, is certain: the greatest need is public education. The policy of silence has failed. Accurate and widespread knowledge is a necessary condition of progress, whatever may be the chosen direction. The main questions at issue concern the agencies, methods, materials, and ideals of sex education.¹ The following propositions are intended as a brief summary of the most important truths concerning each of those four aspects.

I. AGENCIES

1. As there are but few parents who can and will give the necessary instruction, it must be given by other agencies, at least until a new generation of parents has been prepared to meet this responsibility.

2. Although the failure of parents calls for the immediate action of other agencies, the instruction should be so conducted as to break down barriers of false modesty and establish confidence between parents and children.²

3. As the public school is the only agency that reaches nearly all of the children of the nation, sex instruction must eventually be

¹ The best expression of the consensus of opinion of those who should know most about the subject is the *Report of the Special Committee on the Matter and Methods of Sex Education*, issued by the American Federation for Sex Hygiene, New York, December, 1912.

² *Sex Education*, by Ira S. Wile, M.S., M.D., New York, 1912, aims to assist parents to banish the difficulties and to suggest a course of instruction. It is a brief and wholly admirable treatise.

given in all public schools; only thus can we bring forward a new generation of parents, equipped with the knowledge and desire to do their duty by their children.

4. As a majority of our boys and girls do not enter high schools, some instruction in matters of sex should be given in grammar schools.

5. No community should introduce direct sex education into the schools as a part of the curriculum until it has informed parents, cultivated favorable public opinion, and obtained the services of teachers who are qualified for the work by nature and by special preparation.

6. All normal schools and all college departments of education should at once embody in their courses for teachers instruction in the matter and methods of sex education, and adequate instruction should be provided for teachers now in service; and within a reasonable time after such opportunities have been offered in a given state, certificates to teach in that state should be granted only to those who have had the prescribed preparation.

7. As there are not now enough public-school teachers prepared to teach sex hygiene, such teaching must be done in part, at least for many years, by private agencies.

8. Lectures should be arranged for parents by churches, schools, colleges, clubs, granges, boards of health, and other organizations; but no one should be accepted as a lecturer until he is approved by a board of health, social hygiene society, college, or other organization which is unquestionably competent to pass judgment on the qualifications of the speaker.

9. Since there are adults in every community that will not be reached, even when sex education becomes a part of the day-school curriculum, such instruction should be offered in continuation schools, in social settlements, in the Young Men's Christian Association, in college-extension courses, in factories, stores, lumber camps, car shops, indeed, wherever the happy connection can be made between those who need the help and those who are surely qualified to give help.¹

¹ *Progress*, the second annual report of the Oregon Social Hygiene Society, gives some account of the most extensive public education that has been conducted in this country.

II. METHODS

1. Sex instruction as a rule should not be isolated; it should not be prominent; it should be an integral part of courses in biology, hygiene, and ethics. "Specialists" in sex education are undesirable as teachers of boys and girls, in or out of school.

2. As there is a discrepancy between the age of puberty and the age of marriage, due to artificial conditions of modern society, it is important that sex consciousness and sex curiosity should develop slowly: accordingly, sex instruction, unlike instruction in other subjects, must seek to satisfy rather than to stimulate interest in the subject; questions must be answered truthfully, but the answers must not lead the curiosity of the child beyond the information that is immediately necessary for the guidance of his own conduct.

3. The aims of sex education can be fully attained only by the encouragement of every means for keeping the mind occupied throughout waking hours with wholesome thoughts and the body sufficiently active in vigorous work and play, preferably out of doors.

4. Lectures and class instruction should be provided only for carefully selected groups: almost nothing can be gained, and much may be lost, by presenting the subject before miscellaneous audiences.

5. At every age, in every class, there are likely to be individuals who need certain instruction not needed by the entire class: such instruction should be given privately.

6. Books dealing directly with human sex life should not be given to children before the age of puberty; some of the books most widely used are dangerous; instruction should come directly from parent or teacher.

7. Traveling exhibits, made up of concrete and vivid materials, and prepared with due consideration of all the accepted principles of sex education, may be used effectively and inexpensively to bring the truths before many thousands of adults in many places.¹

¹ The exhibit of the Oregon Social Hygiene Society has been seen by over 50,000 people, at a total cost of less than two cents for each person.

8. Against commercialized prostitution, the educational campaign should be one of pitiless publicity: the public should know the names of all persons engaged in promoting the business, whether they are prostitutes (including female *and male*) or liquor dealers, owners of houses, owners of real estate, lessees, proprietors, financial backers, policemen, or politicians; they do not thrive in the light; their connection with the traffic should be proclaimed by means as effective as the "tinplate" signs for disorderly houses.

9. Reliable investigations should be made further to reveal the relationships between sexual immorality and venereal diseases, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, ignorance, low wages, injurious clothing, lack of wholesome amusements, low dance halls, grills, moving picture houses, vaudeville shows and so-called legitimate theaters, mental deficiency, armies and navies, and—most important of all—the liquor traffic: and the outcome of such investigations should be made known through persistent campaigns of public education.

10. The findings—though not the details—of every vice commission and of every other dependable investigation must be kept before the public, until the truth is common knowledge that segregation never segregates, that safeguarding clinics never safeguard, that medical control never controls, that official protection of immorality increases immorality, and that, if there be any such things as a necessary evil, it is not the shameless partnership of government and vice.

III. MATERIALS

1. Elementary nature-study for children and biological study for boys and girls of high-school age may lead gradually and safely to the teaching of plant and animal reproduction, provided that the subject is not left on the plane of animal life: it is a mistake to suppose that the teaching of biology necessarily promotes right conduct in matters of sex.

2. Subordinate and incidental to instruction in normal sex processes, warning should be given of the dangers of individual vice, illicit sexual intercourse, and venereal diseases: but such instruction should be given only to groups that are homogeneous

in respect to sex, physiological age, and social environment, or preferably, to individuals.¹

3. As sex instruction for young people has none but practical aims, hygienic and moral, only such knowledge concerning sex processes, reproduction, and diseases should be given at each period as is necessary for the welfare of the individual at that period.

4. The practice of masturbation is sufficiently common among both boys and girls to call for warnings to all children at the earliest ages: any teacher or parent should be qualified to help in individual cases.

5. The education of adolescent boys must stress the six great truths that will fortify them against the main arguments of the enemies of decency and health:

(1) Sexual intercourse is not a physiological necessity: continence was never known to impair physical or mental vigor.

(2) There can be but one standard of chastity; the purity that a man demands for his sister he must achieve for himself.

(3) Seminal emissions are natural among healthy men: usually they need cause no concern.

(4) Gonorrhoea is a terrible disease, with tragic consequences that one can never fully foretell; syphilis is worse.

(5) Every woman who offers her body for prostitution is, sooner or later, a probable source of contagion: clean living is the only positive safeguard against venereal disease.

(6) Nearly every "advertising specialist" is a criminal of the most contemptible type; the only safe adviser is the doctor in reputable standing who is not afraid to sign his name to his prescription or to his advice.

IV. IDEALS

1. "The function of education is to guide the intellect into a knowledge of right and wrong, to supply motives for right conduct, and to furnish occasions by which alone can moral habits be cultivated" (Drummond).

¹ See *American Youth*, New York, April, 1913 (Sex Education number). An article by George W. Hinckley tells of the ideal way in which he gives individual instruction to his boys at Good Will Farm, Hinckley, Maine.

2. The first aim of sex education is necessarily to bring about an open-minded, serious, if possible, a reverend, attitude toward sex and motherhood, in place of the traditional secrecy and vulgarity; a teacher who cannot do this should do nothing.¹

3. Instruction concerning venereal diseases which leaves the impression that the chief danger of illicit intercourse is "getting caught," should not be tolerated. Knowledge of facts, though scientifically accurate, is not necessarily protection to the individual or to society.

4. In so far as the sex life of animals is made the basis of instruction, the *difference* between man and the lower animals is the point to emphasize; otherwise the facts of animal life may appear to justify irresponsible sex activities, whereas the glory of man is his control over animal instincts.

5. Since it is not ignorance of what is right, but rather the will to do the right, that is usually responsible for sexual delinquency among adults, the program of public education must include more effective moral education in all grades of all schools: every subject, properly taught, is a means of cultivating will power, of strengthening character, but the school curriculum is now made to yield but a small part of its possibilities.

6. The appeal must be made to self-respect and to chivalry; especially through history and literature, the idea of sex must be spiritualized; the right education of the emotions is fundamental.²

7. Through the study of heredity and eugenics, the social responsibility of the individual may be made to serve as a higher incentive for right conduct than the fear of disease.

8. If there is one truth of sex education that needs emphasis above all others, it is that any plan for meeting the social emergency that would relax the control of moral and spiritual law over sex impulses is antagonistic not only to physical health but as well to the highest development of personality and to the progressive evolution of human society.

¹ "Sex-Instruction as a Phase of Social Education," in *Religious Education*, 1913, by Maurice A. Bigelow, is one of the best articles on this subject.

² F. W. Roerster, *Marriage and the Sex Problem*, Stokes Co., New York. No book on this subject has reached a higher plane of idealism. At the same time it is scientifically sound.